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## Congress enacts most of farm bill over Bush veto

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Congress enacted a massive election-year farm bill Thursday over President Bush's veto, sending new and bigger subsidies for farmers and more food stamps to help the poor with rising grocery prices.

The 82-13 vote in the Senate following a 316-108 vote Wednesday night in the House provided Democrats only their second veto override in Bush's presidency, but they harvested a constitutional controversy with it.

Not all of the bill that Congress passed last week is becoming law immediately. Due to a printing glitch, the version that Bush vetoed was missing 34 pages on international food aid and trade — a mistake that may require Congress to send the White House yet another bill.

The president claimed the legislation was too expensive and too generous with subsidies for farmers who are already enjoying record high prices and incomes.

The \$290 billion bill increases food stamps by \$1 billion a year. It also increases subsidies for some crops and for the first time subsidizes growers of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The printing error turned a triumphant political victory into a vexing embarrassment for Democrats.

The party's leaders in the House decided to pass the bill again, including the missing section in the version that Bush got. That vote was 306-110, again enough to override another veto from Bush should the need arise.

Democratic leadership aides said the Senate will deal with the problem when Congress returns in June from a one-week vacation.

House Republicans used the error to plead Democratic incompetence. They complained that Bush vetoed a different bill from the one Congress passed, raising questions that the eventual law would be unconstitutional.

The White House also seized on the error.

"Maybe it gives them one more chance to take a look and think about how much they're asking the taxpayers to spend at a time of record farm income," said White House spokeswoman Dana Perino. "I think what this clearly shows is that they can even screw up spending the taxpayers' money unwisely."

Reid said the process is entirely legal.

"We have, under good legal precedent, going back to a case I understand in 1892 where something like this happened before, it is totally constitutional," he said.

Robert B. Dove, a former Senate parliamentarian, agreed.

"It really doesn't matter what Congress actually does, all that matters is what goes to the president," he said. "The courts don't really want to get into the workings of Congress and try to figure out what the Congress really meant to do."

But House Republicans continued to berate Democrats over the mistake, delaying action by forcing the House into a vote over whether the Democrats should be investigated for abuse of power. The motion was dismissed on a party line vote.

"The House should not gloss over an incident of this magnitude," Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said on the House floor. "It's a serious constitutional violation."

Bush has opposed the legislation from the start, threatening his first veto last July. A bipartisan group of negotiators on the bill made small cuts to subsidies to appease the White House, but Bush said it wasn't enough.

Congressional Republicans overwhelmingly abandoned Bush in voting to override the legislation, overlooking its cost amid public concern about the weak economy and high gas and grocery prices. GOP lawmakers are anxious about their own prospects less than six months before Election Day.

About two-thirds of the bill would pay for nutrition programs such as food stamps, about \$40 billion is for farm subsidies and almost \$30 billion would go to farmers to idle their land and for other environmental programs.

The farm bill also would:

\_Extend and expand dairy programs.

\_Increase loan rates for sugar producers.

\_Expand a program to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to schoolchildren.

\_Cut a per-gallon ethanol tax credit for refiners from 51 cents to 45 cents. The credit supports the blending of fuel with the corn-based additive. More money would go to cellulosic ethanol, made from plant matter.

\_Require that meats and other fresh foods carry labels with their country of origin.



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